DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 040 EA 017 665

AUTHOR	Splitt, David
TITLE	How to Conduct the Evaluation Process. Tips for Principals from NASSP.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
PUB DATE	May 85
NOTE	4p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publication Sales, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091 ($1.00 prepaid).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Guides; *Due Process; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Lesson Observation Criteria; Management by Objectives; *Personnel Evaluation; *Principals; *School Personnel; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Supervision

ABSTRACT

The process of performance evaluation of teachers and other school personnel should be conducted with their full knowledge and involvement. Due process procedures require that a teacher be fully informed of any negative appraisals by a superior, have an opportunity to discuss the problems, and receive guidance toward solutions. The following steps should be included in an evaluation process: (1) have a written evaluation system, (2) objectively identify areas that will be evaluated, (3) specify the level of performance expected, (4) schedule regular evaluation conferences with all employees, (5) be fair and honest in rating each area, (6) note continuing deficiencies in subsequent evaluations, and (7) be consistent. If serious problems with an employee may lead to dismissal, it is necessary to supplement the evaluation form and conference with a summary letter to the employee that details the areas covered, the weaknesses noted, and the suggestions and directions given. A sample summary letter is appended. (MLF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Tips for Principals from NASSP May 1985

How To Conduct the Evaluation Process

ED256040

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Koerner

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 017 665

Tips for Principals from NASSP May 1985

How To Conduct the Evaluation Process

Dismissing an employee for incompetence or other unsatisfactory behavior or performance is one of the most difficult management tasks administrators face.

For most, it boils down to a basic "fear of firing." While some principals simply try to avoid confrontation of any kind, others develop this fear after a few unsuccessful attempts.

Almost every principal who considers firing an employee faces the specter of lengthy administrative hearings and even a courtroom battle. Mistakes in following due process procedures or failure to support charges with the right paperwork can cause a principal to lose a termination case and may even blemish his or her own record as an administrator.

Avoiding the Major Pitfall

Too many principals think that maintaining a file on an unsatisfactory teacher is the best way to generate evidence for dismissal.

They fill a manila folder marked "CONFIDENTIAL" with notes, memoranda, and occasional copies of complaints or poorly prepared lesson plans. They hoard the contents of the file until they finally decide that they have had enough. Then they assemble their assortment of papers into a written justification for an evaluation of unsatisfactory performance and termination.

This "surprise" approach to adverse actions invariably leads to strong resistance and often litigation.

Why? The element of prior notice is lacking. While the teacher may have assumed that "The principal doesn't like me," or felt that "Things weren't going right," the sudden escalation of implied dissatisfaction into open adverse action will probably trigger a valid reaction of "You're just out to get me."

The best way to avoid this accusation is to bring problems out into the open as early as possible. If a teacher *knows* that you think there are problems and that you are going to act if those problems are not solved, you will probably meet less resistance in the final stages of the employer-employee relationship.

The whole process of performance evaluation should be conducted with the full knowledge and involvement of employees. The teacher should be fully informed of any negative appraisals by his or her superior, should have an opportunity to discuss the problems, and should receive guidance toward solutions.

Some principals who keep confidential files on unsatisfactory teachers are unsure about what they can put in the file.

The answer is actually quite simple. Don't put anything in the file that you wouldn't want the teacher to see. An even better solution is to share with the employee what goes in the file *before* it is filed.

Evaluation: Step-by-Step

The following steps should be included in your evaluation process. Leaving out one of these basic ingredients could leave a weak link in your chain of due process:

- Have a *written evaluation system* that states how it will be applied. Make your standards for performance specific and give examples.
- Identify areas in which performance will be judged as objectively as possible. Don't say "a teacher will be expected to use good classroom technique." List the major elements: management of discipline and respect for both teacher and student; good planning and orderly presentation of subject matter; and strict adherence to grading and testing policy, including recording, daily grades, tests, and other progress indicators in the grade book.
- Specify the level of performance that is expected in each area of evaluation. If a policy requires that a minimum number of grades be placed in a teacher's grade book, spell it out. For example: "A teacher must have at least three daily grades, two grades for written work, and one test grade for each student entered in the grade book every week."
- Schedule regular evaluation conferences with all employees. Don't just concentrate on the ones you consider "bad apples."
- Never try to motivate a teacher by giving an undeserved good rating in an area where the

EA 017 665

teacher is weak. Be fair and honest.

- If a particular deficiency continues, don't ignore it in subsequent evaluations. If a problem isn't getting better, note that fact in the evaluation and re-emphasize your suggestions for improvement.
- Be consistent. The perception by employees that the evaluation process is *fair*, even if they don't always agree with the results, can give credibility to eventual decisions for adverse action.

Put It in Writing

Unfortunately, there are no "fill-in-the-blanks" evaluation forms that provide an adequate basis for termination. If serious problems with an employee may lead to dismissal, you need to supplement the evaluation form and conference with a *summary letter* to the employee.

Summary letters are probably the most important documents in a termination file, and can make or break an adverse action proceeding.

The letter should detail the areas covered, the weaknesses noted, and the suggestions and directives given to the teacher.

Always be sure that the teacher acknowledges having received the letter. Ask him or her to sign a dated copy marked "I Have Received and Read This Letter."

If deficiencies continue (or if new problems arise), hold another conference and write another letter. Keep the tone of each letter the same: businesslike, objective, factual, and aimed at obtaining compliance with policy and improving performance.

After you have held several conferences and sent several letters, the employee should be forewarned that his or her work is unsatisfactory. You have tried to inform the teacher that his or her performance is not up to standards and, at the same time, you have established a solid record if the employee challenges an adverse action.

If the evaluation conference letters show a consistent pattern of repeated warnings and failure to comply with directives during a year or two (depending on the employee's tenure in the system), you have built a good case for an adverse action.

Written by David Splitt, an attorney in private practice in Washington, D.C., and a former high school teacher. He served as general counsel to the District of Columbia Board of Education from 1974 to 1979, and now writes a regular monthly column, "School Law," for The Executive Educator.

Contributing Editor: Lu Fulbright

Sample Summary Letter

Last week we met to discuss my observations of your classes and my evaluation of your teaching performance over the last semester. I pointed out that you had several serious problems meeting instructional and non-instructional requirements. You explained that some problems were caused by your conflicting time commitments. The following are my specific directives for improvement:

1. *Lesson Plans*—When you joined the faculty, you received a copy of the *Faculty Handbook*, which included a requirement for submitting copies of lesson plans each Friday for the following week.

On a number of occasions you have not handed in plans until the Tuesday or Wednesday after they were due. You turned in no plans for the first week in November and the second week of December. On each of those occasions, I spoke to you about the deficiency and you promised to be more prompt. I reminded you that school policy requires that the plans be filed in the school office by 3:30 p.m. every Friday.

2. *Class Grades*—At the end of the first fall grading period, your report cards were not ready. At that time, we had an informal conference and you explained that you had been unable to complete the reports because you had an exam in your night class. I also pointed out to you that, during my classroom observations, I noticed that you handed papers back to students without grades or written comments. You stated that you did not have sufficient time to thoroughly read the papers, so you returned them ungraded.

I advised you of the importance of checking student work and providing feedback to them. You agreed that this was an important part of teaching, and stated that you would improve your time management and complete grading all of your students' papers.

While your classroom rapport with students is good, there is room for a lot of improvement in your organization of classwork. Adequate lesson planning and providing sufficient time for grading papers and evaluating students are important, and you need to improve significantly in these areas.

If you disagree with any of the conclusions or facts stated in this letter, or if you have any questions about these directives or suggestions, please advise me in writing by the end of next week so that we can have another meeting to discuss any differences.

Tips for Principals *is an occasional publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. John E. Boie, President; Scott D. Thomson, Executive Director; Thomas F. Koerner, Editor; Carol Bruce, Associate Editor.*